
RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS BY THE CITIZENS COALITION FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE RULE OF LAW

**Kampala,
5 July 2026**

THE PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS CONFIRMS THE PROBLEM IT DENIES: STATE IMPUNITY, NOT DISRESPECT FOR LAW, IS THE CRISIS

The Citizens Coalition for the Defence of the Rule of Law (CCDRL) has reviewed President Museveni’s Address to the Nation of 4 July 2026, delivered in response to concerns raised by the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda.

Unfortunately, the Inter-Religious Council’s communications to the President are not public. To the extent the Council speaks for Ugandans, and seeks accountability for use of public power, we believe those communications, should be made public. Ugandans are entitled to know what was asked of their government on their behalf, and to judge for themselves whether the President’s address actually answers it.

We associate ourselves with the statement by the Uganda Law Society (ULS) condemning the President’s remarks on the trial of Dr. Kizza Besigye and his stated intention to abolish bail.

We wish to express concerns at the content of the address and raise other salient issues.

Abductions, torture and illegal detentions.

What the President’s own address admits is a documented pattern of abduction, torture, and illegal detention carried out under the authority of the Commander of the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces, General Muhoozi Kainerugaba.

The President calls these actions “long overdue actions to fill” a “gap” left by weak courts and lenient bail. He invokes the 1982 execution of Zabuloni and his companions in Semuto, and the public execution of soldiers as precedent for extrajudicial punishment being a source of the National Resistance Movement’s legitimacy. He describes the 2021 death of Zebra in Kawempe, in unclear circumstances following contact with security forces, as resolved not by investigation or prosecution but by a private “blood settlement” with the family at State House.

This is not a rebuttal of the abduction and torture allegations. It is a justification of them, framed in the language of indigenous restorative justice, and offered as an alternative to a judicial process the President openly regards as a colonial obstruction.

The Constitution does not permit the executive to suspend due process because it judges the judiciary too slow or too lenient. Articles 23, 24, and 44 guarantee personal liberty, freedom from torture and cruel treatment, and make that freedom non-derogable, in any circumstance, for any reason. There is no constitutional gap for security forces to fill by abduction.

If the public has lost confidence in the law, it is not, as the President suggests, because courts grant bail too readily. It is because the state itself has demonstrated, in its own President's words, that it will act outside the law when it finds the law inconvenient. A government cannot credibly demand public respect for legal process while defending its own departures from it as necessary correction.

The President dismisses the slogan "Bizeemu," that the bad things of the past have come back, as wrong. Ugandans say it because it is true. Not everyone taken by the Army ends up in court, as the President insists happens. Sam Mugumya was taken years ago and remains missing to this day and same goes for several National Unity supporters like John Bosco Kibalama. Kenyan nationals Bob Oyoo and Nicholas Njagi were also held for months and eventually released without charge, from what the President described as "his freezer,"

These are not isolated errors. They are the same pattern of abduction, denial, and disappearance that "Bizeemu" describes, carried out by the same army under a new generation of commanders.

On the deportation of Martha Karua SC

We must record our concern at the deportation and declaration as persona non grata of Hon. Martha Karua SC, a distinguished lawyer and citizen of a fellow East African Community Member State. No explanation has been given for this action. It is an egregious violation of the EAC Treaty and the Common Market Protocol, both of which guarantee the free movement of persons, including professionals, across Partner States, and neither of which contains any exception for the summary exclusion of a Senior Counsel and public figure without stated cause. A government that cannot account for its treatment of a visiting East African lawyer forfeits the standing to lecture Ugandans on respect for law.

Our demands

1. To the Uganda People's Defence Forces: All arrests must be carried out by police or persons with lawful arresting authority, not by soldiers. Every arrested person must be produced before a court within the 48-hour constitutional time limit.
2. To all security agencies: Shut down the "basement" and "freezer". This cannot be your legacy. Detainees must be held only in officially gazette places of detention.
3. On treatment in custody: No detainee may be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, consistent with Article 24 of the Constitution and Uganda's obligations under the UN Convention Against Torture. The ODPP must also take steps to investigate and prosecute offences under the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act.
4. On access during detention: Every detainee must have prompt access to their next of kin, a doctor of their choice, and a lawyer, as guaranteed under Article 23(3) and (4) of the Constitution.
5. To the Judiciary: We echo the ULS in calling on the Chief Justice and Judiciary leadership to publicly defend judicial independence against executive commentary on pending cases, and to insist that bail remains a judicial function, not an executive one. The Judiciary must also refuse to receive cases of persons who have been illegally detained and tortured. The Judiciary must also style up on the handling of bail applications and proceed in a manner that fully respects the accused's fundamental mental right to liberty. Recent incidents of adjourning even a mandatory bail application make a mockery of the Constitution you are sworn to defend. Punishment by process must stop.
6. On Martha Karua SC: Provide a full public explanation of the reasons for her deportation and declaration as persona non grata, and account for the action under the EAC Treaty and Common Market Protocol.

7. The UHRC must stop the silence on the rampant abuse of human rights in Uganda and be both bold and proactive in protecting the human rights of Ugandans. For starters, UHRC must inquire about this notorious basement and shut it down.

The CCDRL will continue to press for rules of law, good governance and human rights.

Issued by the Citizens Coalition for the Defence of the Rule of Law

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